DiGIAMMARINO WINS FIRST LATE MODEL MAIN...THREE WINNING STREAKS END & TWO CONTINUE

Race Date: July 1, 2006

by Tim Kennedy

The weather was hotter than a 4th of July firecracker and so was the five-division, six-main event competition Saturday at Irwindale Speedway on Advantage Ford Fireworks Night. Following a 100-degree day, drivers raced in the mid-80s at sunset. More than 6,500 spectators made the event the 14th sellout at the eight-year old facility and the first since the holiday weekend race on July 2 last year. The final checkered flag flew at 10:10 p.m after Dan DiGiammarino won his first Auto Club Late Model 40-lap main event in the featured division of the evening on the banked half-mile. A 15-minute aerial fireworks show followed for the enthusiastic audience.

Winning streaks ended in three of the five series and continued in two series. Rick Crow started last and won his third consecutive Justice Brothers Pure Stock oval main in a 15-car, 25-lap race on the third-mile. He came back later to win an eight-car Pure Stock Figure 8 ten-lap race in his same 1972 Chevy Chevelle, which is painted all pink to honor his late mother who succumbed to cancer. Both pure stock mains were all green flag runs. Crow 's feature victory total at IS rests at half a dozen, with all six coming this season. The Saugus Speedway veteran's total includes two Figure 8 triumphs in his pink car. Young gun Andrew Anderson won his third straight Briggs & Stratton-powered Bandolero Cars 20-lap race on the third-mile.

DiGiammarino, 35, started third in his 2005 Chevy Monte Carlo and won the feature by 15-yards (0.832 officially). He finished a career-best second two weeks ago and earned $1,000 for his initial victory. DiGiammarino also won a "Dash for Cash" for the six fastest qualifiers, starting first as sixth quickest and leading all six laps. The San Bernardino resident became the first Late Model feature winner other than Tim Huddleston, the 2005 series champion, and Travis Thirkettle, the 2006 point leader, in 18 races. Their personal stranglehold on first place dated to April 16, 2005 when rookie Austin Grabowski won a L/M main. Since that date Huddleston scored eight triumphs and Thirkettle won ten, including the last five features.

Fastest qualifier Greg Crutcher started second and ended the Vista Paint Super Stock winning streak of Bryan Harrell at four in a row. Point leader Harrell has won six of eight mains this season. The two Camaro drivers battled closely all 30-laps on the half-mile. Crutcher, who won his last S/S feature on the Independence Day weekend last year, benefited by a lap 28 caution. Harrell started first, led the first 27 laps and held a five-yard advantage when a single car spinout caused a caution flag. Inside-running Crutcher passed outside-running Harrell through the third and fourth turns on lap 28. He edged Harrell by half a length on each of the final three laps. Crutcher's winning margin was 0.222 over Harrell in a 21-car field.

Tom Landreth, the four-time Legend Cars track champion and current point leader, returned to his winning ways after skipping the last race to attend NASCAR races at Infineon Raceway in Sonoma. The 36-year old driver set fast time in a 36-car field and started second with a two-car inversion. He spotted pole-sitter K. J. Garrison the lead for five laps and then led the final 25 laps. He recorded his fifth victory in seven races to date. He also ended the two in a row run by Grabowski, who doubles in Legend and Late Models. Grabowski, a Damien High School senior in September, dropped rookie Garrison to third with an inside pass in turn two on the final lap.

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